

# ENTREVISTA INTERVIEW

ANTONIO CANDIDO, CINEMA, BRAZIL

Olga Fernández

Adilson Mendes

An interview granted to Olga Fernández (★) and Adilson Mendes (★★) in São Paulo, on March 7, 2011 and recorded on video by Max Fagotti (★★★). Published in *Araticum* magazine, v. 20, n. 2 (2019): Dossier Antonio Candido. Translated by Charles Anchor Holmquist.<sup>1</sup>

In 2011, while finishing my doctor's thesis on Paulo Emilio Sales Gomes at ECA-USP, I decided to interview Antonio Candido, one of the film critic's constant interlocutors in his heyday. The wealth of correspondence between the two in the 40s and 50s, the pioneering film courses in the University of São Paulo's Department of Literary Theory and Comparative Literature in the 60s, their mutual enthusiasm for the founding of the Brazilian Film Archive (Cinamateca Brasileira) in the 70's, all attesting to the strong bonds that brought together a whole generation of film enthusiasts aimed at creating a project for Brazil, something that did not prevent political or even cinematographic divergencies.

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<sup>1</sup> Reprodução gentilmente autorizada por Ana Luísa Escorel de Moraes a Adilson Mendes.

My academic interests endeavored specifically to understand the details revolving around the research carried out by Paulo Emilio on the most important Brazilian filmmaker during the age of silent movies. The work in question was entitled *Cataguases e Cinearte na Formação de Humberto Mauro*, the research paper that gave Paulo Emilio his doctorate degree in 1972, under the orientation of Gilda de Mello e Souza. Two years later the thesis would be published with a new title: *Humberto Mauro, Cataguases, Cinearte* (Perspectiva, 1974). I was intrigued by the reasons behind the change in title as it went from thesis to book. And the word “formation”, in the original title led me straight to Antonio Candido who, over the telephone, promptly accepted my invitation for a talk after mentioning the name of his friend from the days of the *Clima* magazine. After this, our first meeting, I was stimulated by his warm hospitality and mustered my courage to propose new meetings. And it was in this way that a quick formal conversation was transformed into a series of four interviews, of which some remnants of our last encounter (on March 7, 2011) can now be seen transcribed in the interview form. Despite the extreme fidelity in transcribing the content, it is very hard to translate Antonio Candido’s exuberant presence to the written word as he reflects on Brazil, its culture and people. The transcription does not do justice to the expressive gestures of the professor/actor, who imitates and satirizes his interlocutors. Written words diminish the acute perspicacity of the critic’s humor, the prosody of which evokes gone-by days that witnessed the birth of modern Brazil. Perhaps a movie will one day help mitigate this flaw...

For our last encounter, in an attempt to share and impress Antonio Candido’s fascinating personality in the memory of others, I decided to invite actress Olga Fernandez and filmmaker Max Fagotti, who agreed to participate with the condition that we record both on video and in our memory the amiable conversation that we all immediately struck up. But then, instead of a conversation revolving

around Paulo Emilio, as the three other conversations with me had been, Antonio Candido surprised us all by offering us a repartee on his own relation with cinema, evoking Brazilian films no longer in existence and which cannot be found in filmmaking annals, revealing his preference of styles and actresses, talking about his own work and praising once again his friend Paulo Emilio and his political legacy. The great narrator's privileged memory and expressiveness is able to spark readers imagination, illuminating the history of contemporary Brazilian filmmaking.

**Adilson Mendes**

**AC** – ... well, you all want to hear me talk about cinema, right? Cinema was my mania. A true mania. I saw the world through films. I'd go to Rio every year – my mother was from Rio. And back home in my small town, all we had was one rundown movie theater, where films would arrive two years late. In a sorry state. Not like in Rio. I was there, for the inauguration of Cinelandia.<sup>2</sup> The great artists. The Glória, Império, Capitólio and Odeon movie theaters. My father would take us there, me and my cousins... So, I'd see the fresh reels. The plush upholstery seats, the ushers... Like any good downhome *Mineiro*, I was enchanted by it all.

Serrador was really famous, began his career in Curitiba. My mother-in-law's hometown, for whom films were something new. You'd go to the place and all you'd see was some black guys eating watermelon. That's it. She told me she remembers all

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<sup>2</sup> Cinelândia is the popular name of Marechal Floriano Peixoto Square in downtown Rio de Janeiro. The innumerable movie theaters there were constructed by Francisco Serrador starting in the mid 20s. Due to their great size (the Capitolio Theater had 1,300 seats) and their bourgeois characteristics, the theaters were known as "movie palaces", modeled after buildings that marked the expansion of the North American film industry. For a description of the inside of these theaters cf. Kracauer, Siegfried. "Cinema". In: \_\_\_\_\_. *The Mass Ornament*. São Paulo: CosacNaify, 2009. p.303-350. [translation. Carlos Eduardo Jordão Machado and Marlene Holzhausen].

the seeds on the floor, and everybody would just stare, dumbfounded.<sup>3</sup> My mother in law saw the first things Serrador showed in Curitiba. He came from there to Rio to build an empire, Cinelandia, located on Marechal Floriano Square, on the left was the famous Ajuda Convent that was later sold and where they built four skyscrapers. Ten stories. He built the Serrador Hotel on the corner, which was a wonderful hotel. I'd always stay there. An extraordinary guy, him and his brothers.

**AM**– What films did you see?

**AC**– Ah, I saw a lot of interesting things. I went to Europe later. I was ten and a half and I stayed a year with my family. But, before I left, a magazine came out called *Cinelandia*, which was great. It was in Spanish, all glossy paper. Probably propaganda for some big American company. I read it and saw that a movie with Gary Cooper had come out. When we got to Europe, a cousin of mine who had gone with us showed us that it was in the theaters there. We went to see it. There was something strange about the movie. It was a silent movie and the orchestra was playing. As you know, the orchestra would try to play something that fit the movie. To not go and do something stupid you had to have a little discernment, because I heard of a film session of *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*<sup>4</sup> in which Rodolfo Valentino dances a tango while the orchestra plays a waltz. The orchestra had to have a little brain. But, getting back to the movie we went to see in Europe, we went in. It was a war movie. And the orchestra began playing. And then, suddenly, they would stop and we'd hear the sound of a German machine gun fire. We all thought it was the orchestra that was making the sound, but it wasn't, it was one of the first movies with synchronized sound. And me, without knowing it, was witnessing the birth of the new age of cinema. The orchestra would stop playing, but there were no dialogues, only the sounds. Comedian Harold Lloyd would sit on some accordion and you'd hear "fomm" [emulating the sound of a car horn].

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<sup>3</sup> Antonio Candido is most likely referring to the film *Watermelon Contest* (1896), produced by the Thomas Edison Co.

<sup>4</sup> *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse* (1921) a film starring Rodolfo Valentino and directed by Rex Ingram. A copy of this film is kept in the Library of Congress in the U.S.

We'd have a great time. What we liked the best were the series. Sixteen episodes: *Breaking Through*.<sup>5</sup> We'd wait the whole week. Play cowboys and bandits. And we'd get so involved and, as they were silent movies, we'd play silently as well. Gunshots, for example, were silent. You'd point your gun and go "shuuu" [onomatopoeia alluding to a very small caliber bullet]. I'd say something to my brother without words and then put the subtitles in myself: "The character is telling you to hurry up or the bandit is going to holdup the train". We'd play out the exact same mimicry of the silent screen. We'd play movies. We were all so tied up with one form of art that we didn't even think of talking. A lot of fun.

**AM** – Did you ever go see Brazilian films?

**AC** – Yes, I did. I saw a movie, so extraordinarily stupid that I've never forgotten. It was called *O Apóstata, ou os Milagres de Nossa Senhora Aparecida*.<sup>6</sup> Completely

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<sup>5</sup> *Breaking Through* was a serial western in 15 episodes produced in 1921. The movie brought the period in which movies were shown in serial form to an end. Produced by Vitagraph Company of America, starring Carmel Myers, Wallace MacDonald and Vincente Howard. The film is considered as being no longer in existence.

<sup>6</sup> There are no records of the film *O Apóstata, ou Os Milagres de Nossa Senhora Aparecida* in film archives nor in Brazilian historical film annals, something which certainly deserves to be looked into. However, a likely similar film as referred to by Candido is *Os Milagres de Nossa Senhora da Penha* (1923), the main remnant of which – as it is considered to no longer exist – is the statement by the film's director Arturo Carrari to historian Maria Rita Galvão. He comments on the storyline of the movie shot using the poor cinematographic facilities in São Paulo at the turn of the century: "The story began showing an old half breed beggar outside the entrance to the Penha Church (in Penha, São Paulo) telling passersby how Our Lady had revealed herself to him and just how miraculous she was. The movie showed the first small wooden church that had been built first and then later reveals the marvelous new church in the background built in place of the old and where the saint had appeared. The miracles she performed were: FIRST – A woman approaches with a young child holding a ball; she comes upon an acquaintance and forgets about the boy; the boy drops his ball and runs after it; the ball bounces out over the train tracks with the child in quick pursuit; the train comes down the track; it is going to hit the boy; the mother screams: "Our Lady of Penha...! Our Lady comes down from the heavens and sets herself between the train and the boy just as the train is about to hit him. SECOND – A peasant works tilling the land; a snake wraps around his ankle; the peasant shouts out loud: "Help me Our Lady of Penha!" Our Lady appears and the snake begins to slowly unroll its body from the man's leg (the snake was made out of rubber of course and the scene shot painstakingly frame by frame). THIRD – A car speeds down the winding road to the coast; the driver loses control and the car plunges down the mountainside; the religious occupants scream: *Save us Our Lady of Penha! And they are saved while the unbelievers die.* (Our italics). A very hard miracle to shoot, first the car was shot going backwards from the edge of the cliff, and then later a cardboard replica of the car was shot falling down the mountainside; then they went down and shot the actors with fake blood covering their faces. LAST MIRACLE (the first two being emotionally charged because of the danger, this one being the most touching) – A young bride weeps in despair because her fiancé is a no-good bum who spends his time drinking and going out with other women; she remembers Our Lady of Penha; goes to church and prays for the saint to make her man repent and reform his lowdown ways, lead him down the true

asinine. I remember the actress who played Our Lady Aparecida. This mulatto girl, playing the saint. The apostate, who doesn't believe in God, doesn't believe in anything, up until when he cries out in a moment of need: "Help me, Our Lady Aparecida!" And he can walk again. In other words, a miracle. And Our Lady wearing that lopsided crown on her head, hardly able to keep her balance, poor girl, blesses him. I remember it because it was so idiotic. I remember another movie that I saw. Shot here in São Paulo. I was from a small town, so seeing movies on the big screen was something else. It was *O Guarani*.<sup>7</sup> There were various adaptations of *O Guarani*. There was this famous one in which the forest was the Luz Park. But, then, at a certain point, Peri is on scene and a streetcar passes by in the background. Smack in the middle of the XVI century, a streetcar in the background. Now, later, thanks to Paulo Emilio, who did an extraordinary job recuperating Brazilian films, I realized that there were a lot of interesting movies from that time. Listen, the burning of the Brazilian *Cinemateca* [in reference to the fire in 1957] was one of the greatest tragedies for Brazilian culture. The three fires at the *Cinemateca*... a real tragedy.<sup>8</sup> There was this friend of ours from Catanduva, Vicente Celso Quaglia, Paulo Emilio's big friend, a lawyer and professor who helped recuperate old movies. The movie theater in Catanduva had been storing film cans since 1904, 1905. And he gave them all to Paulo Emilio. And they were all destroyed in the first fire of the *Cinemateca*. Everything burnt!

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path. Our Lady answers the unhappy girl's prayers and the film ends in a large party after the marriage ceremony at the Penha Church."

It is worth mentioning that this same cinematography being produced in São Paulo, both precarious and conservative, also takes the brunt of Oswald Andrade's scorn in *Memórias Sentimentais de João Miramar* (1924), as he gets his character involved with a certain Cubatense production house. In his next novel, *Serafim Ponte Grande* (written between 1925-29 but only published in 1933), his caustic irony is turned against Independencia Filmes belonging to Del Picchia.

<sup>7</sup> The version of *O Guarani* produced by Vittorio Capellaro in 1916, with an entirely Italian cast and shot on locations at Jabaquara Park, Cantareira mountains, Pinheiros River, Butantan Institute, Lapa neighborhood, Serra do Mar and the Santo Amaro lake. Capellaro himself agrees just how far off the film was from fulfilling his initial expectations: "enormous sacrifices due to the lack of qualified personnel, equipment, studios (...)." Cf. Capellaro, J. V.; and Capellaro, V. J. G. *Vittorio Capellaro: Italiano Pioneiro do Cinema Brasileiro*. In: *Cadernos de Pesquisa*, n. 2, Rio de Janeiro: Centro de Pesquisadores do Cinema Brasileiro, 1986.

<sup>8</sup> Antonio Candido has been connected with the Brazilian *Cinemateca* from the beginning and was one of the archives first directors after its creation, in 1956, when the institution broke away from the Museum of Modern Art in São Paulo. In 1975, Candido begins once again to take an active part in the *Cinemateca*, becoming its president, a position he held once again in 1978, after Paulo Emilio's death.

**AM** – So you were involved in recuperating the memory of Brazilian audiovisuals too.

**AC** – Back in my hometown, the owner of the movie theater was a guy called Emílio Castriota and he had this nephew, who everybody called Zé Camisola. Zé Camisola told my cousin that he had movies he was going to send to the *Cinemateca*. But nothing ever came of it. But at least one guy, called Otávio “Paramount”, who’s life revolved around movies, a very poor guy, donated a beautiful copy of one of those movies made to be shown on Good Friday to the *Cinemateca: Vida e Morte de Nosso Senhor Jesus Cristo*.<sup>9</sup> This movie came from my hometown.

**AM** – Did any other movies come from your hometown?

**AC** – There were a lot of professional cameramen, who’d go from one town to another shooting films to make money. So, maybe you had a cattle ranch and the cameraman would offer to make you a film for five hundred *mil reis*. He’d shoot you and your family; you get what I mean? [using his best anchorman’s voice] “Colonel Adilson, at his pleasant estate accompanied by his very elegant wife and daughter”. Everyone posing. There’s this very well-known uncle of mine, Antonio, like me, who decided he wanted to make a film of his farm. But things didn’t work out as planned, as they shot him and his family first, and then went to shoot the corral, the pigsty. My uncle climbed up on the fence around the pigsty, all the pigs down below. The cameraman then shot the pigs and then my uncle and his family. But when it came to editing it came out like this: “and here’s a view of the healthy pigs on the farm”. [laughter] The film was produced by a company called Doá, Doá Brothers. (★) They shot farms, cities, demonstrations, events throughout southern Minas Gerais. I wrote about my childhood experiences with cinema, a text entitled *Cinematógrafo*, later included in the book *Recortes*.<sup>10</sup>

**AM** – In the controversy between silent and spoken films, what’s your position?

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<sup>9</sup> The movie refers to *Vie et Passion de Notre Seigneur Jésus-Christ* (1909), directed by Ferdinand Zecca, with the collaboration of Segundo de Chomon.

<sup>10</sup> Candido, Antonio. *Recortes*. São Paulo: Ouro sobre Azul, 2004.

**AC** – I think cinema is the XX century's major art form. I never really agreed with Paulo Emilio who thought that silent movies were the most important. I always thought that spoken movies were simply fantastic, much better. Silent movies were much more theatrical. [expressive gestures] And the greatest thing about films are the close-ups. Close-ups force actors to act naturally. And the naturalness brought about by spoken films is simply extraordinary. I am totally in favor of spoken films. Paulo Emilio was very close to the guys from the Chaplin Club, in Rio de Janeiro. They were all in favor of silent movies. Rubem Braga wrote a very good chronicle on them: Vinicius de Moraes, Otavio de Faria, Almir de Castro and Paulo, they all loved them. Rubem Braga said: "it seems as if the really great thing is silence, the beauty of silence, its purity. These friends of mine...", Rubem was a friend of theirs, "these friends of mine should all go to the movies, in a completely dark theater with no movie, that way they'd have their absolute purity".

**AM**– Did Paulo Emilio have a determining role in your cinematographic culture?

**AC** – My cinematographic ideas used to irritate Paulo Emilio a bit. A real pity you never got to meet him. A guy like no other. The most fascinating friend I had. Paulo Emilio was like the sun. A man out of the norm. A very generous guy, who gave money to anyone who needed it.

Paulo was arrested on his birthday, in December of 1935. Went to jail and then made some kind of absurd escape, in February of 1937. He'd hide out in one place, and then another, until this really nice guy, a great reactionary, called José Carlos Macedo Soares, a fantastic guy, who had been the minister of justice, fixed things up. Anyone who hadn't been legally pronounced guilty was free to go. And Paulo had never been to trial, they didn't have anything on him. They'd just arrest people to scare everyone. His father went to the police station and told them he hadn't received any kind of sentence. And then after, he went to Europe, to study at IDHEC [Institut des Hautes Études Cinématographiques]. That was in 1937, when I still hadn't met him.<sup>11</sup> I heard about him for the first time through one of my colleagues at law school who

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<sup>11</sup> Paulo Emilio was arrested on December 16, 1935 during the repressive wave sweeping the country after an attempted communist revolution. Despite having not participated directly in any communist activities, Paulo was held in the Paraíso and Maria Zelia prisons until February 10, 1937. Cf. Souza, José Inácio Melo. *Paulo Emilio no Paraíso*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2002.



told me: “Paulo Emilio Sales Gomes is in Paris. They guy is completely crazy! He’s studying at Cité Universitaire and organized a bullfight with a goat”. He and Amélia Montenegro, who was this crazy girl from São Paulo. And then, years later, when I met him, he told me the story was true.

He came back from France with ideas of pure cinema, the pure rhythm of images. And it was while thinking like this that he founded the Film Club when he came back in 1939. But he would always say that he’d go back to France as soon as he could. And in 1946 he went back. One of the positive things that happened when he went back was that he met the extraordinary critic André Bazin. And Bazin had a completely different view of things. He’d say that cinema was for reproducing reality, to tell things about life, the important being what people tell and how they do it. Nothing of this pure art thing. And so Paulo converted to a more realistic, a more humane perspective of cinema. Something that you can see in his critique that he wrote for the *Suplemento Literário*.<sup>12</sup>

When we were younger, he was our film guide. He’d check out all the papers to see what movies were being shown. He once told us that *Alexander Nevsky*, by Eisenstein, was being shown at Cine Mundi. Cine Mundi was a flea-ridden theater near Sé Square, where you’d get fleas and bedbugs for six months after you went. We’d all be scratching ourselves watching the movie. And I’d go every day of the week: Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday and Sunday.

**AM** – Was this at the time of the *Clima* magazine?

**AC** – Yeah, when *Clima* was coming out. *Clima* began in 1941, stopped for a while in 1942, and then began again in 1944, after which it closed down. *Alexander Nevsky* [1938] was one of the big emotions I had in my life. We all knew the movie by heart. And without even knowing Russian. We’d all say “Vstavay, o velikiy Novgorodi”.

**OF** – What were you reading at the time?

**AC** – Besides films we discussed literature in general. My generation was around for

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<sup>12</sup> In this same Literary Supplement (created by Antonio Candido and directed by Décio de Almeida Prado) in the *Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper, Paulo Emilio wrote two key essays on the French critic: *Descoberta de André Bazin* (21.03.1959) and *O crítico André Bazin* [04.04.1959], both included in *Crítica de Cinema no Suplemento Literário*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982. v.2.

the second phase of Modernism, so, for all of us, Northeastern novels were fundamental. Jorge Amado, José Lins do Rego, Graciliano Ramos, Amando Fontes, Rachel de Queiroz, and some you've never even heard of: Perminio Asfora, Iago Joe, Clovis Amorim, João Cordeiro. Social novels, about simple folk, the workers.

And Paulo Emilio was a real busybody. The god of busybodies. He went as far as to begin an argument with Oswald de Andrade in favor of José Lins do Rego. If Dom Pedro II himself walked by, Paulo, when he was around fifteen or sixteen years old, was likely to walk up and say: "Hey, Pedro, let's go have a beer". He wasn't shy at all. He'd write articles. One of which he wrote against Oswald. He thought that at the time José Lins do Rego was giving readers a much deeper social perspective of things. Contrary to Oswald, who was all tied up with modernistic aesthetics. So, we read a lot of novels coming from the Northeast, but things from France, European novelties as well. All in all, we read a lot.<sup>13</sup>

**OF**– The *Clima* group was mostly literary and artistic then?

**AC** – We were a very well-informed group. We'd always be trading the things we read. We educated ourselves. Ruy Coelho – the most cultured among us all – said that it wasn't we who had made the *Clima* magazine, it had been the magazine that had made us. Something absolutely true. We made ourselves. A group of smart guys and gals, except me, evidently. We'd be discussing things the whole day long. We went out together, go have tea. Before whiskey became the thing, Rubem Braga wrote in one of his chronicles: "This strange generation of professors, who drink malted milk, court to get married and then really do get married."<sup>14</sup> And in the midst of all these well-

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<sup>13</sup> Concerning the controversy between Paulo Emilio and Oswald de Andrade cf: GOMES, Paulo Emilio Sales. "Oswald's disciple in 1935" In: *Crítica de Cinema no Suplemento Literário*, vol.2. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1982. See also Oswald's reply in "Note to Paulo Emilio", in: Calil, Carlos Augusto; Machado, Maria Teresa (Orgs.). *Paulo Emilio: Um Intelectual Na Linha de Frente*. Rio de Janeiro/São Paulo: Embrafilme; Brasiliense, 1986.

<sup>14</sup> On another occasion Antonio Candido himself mentions the ironic comment, but vacillates between the famous chronicler and critic Luis Martins: "I can't remember if it was he [Luís Martins] or Rubem Braga who wrote a chronicle on 'This strange generation of professors, who drink malted milk, court to get married and then really do get married.' According to Rubem Braga we were prudent, well-behaved, drank malted milk, something extremely negative to the bohemians who drank whiskey (in reality we drank tea). Thus the jokes and reciprocal goading." Cf. Candido, Antonio. "Luís Martins" in: \_\_\_\_\_. *Recortes*. São Paulo: Ouro sobre Azul, 2004. p.196. One of these "goading's" was surely Rubem Braga's statement to Mario Neme who was a guest on his *Plataforma da nova geração* [Porto Alegre: Editora Globo, 1945]:

behaved boys and girls, Paulo was the biggest aberration. And that is why that young man, José Inácio Melo Souza, who's got the same last name as me but isn't related, wrote in his book; the book, incidentally, he wrote on Paulo Emilio is excellent, really good, the title of one of the chapters in the book says that Paulo Emilio is "the sheriff in the realm of fantasy".<sup>15</sup> The things we didn't do, Paulo would do. Insurrection, protesting, having lovers, being arrested, escaping from prison. All the crazy things we wanted to do Paulo would do them for us. He was simply amazing! An incredible person. Anybody who's never met Paulo Emilio doesn't know what the salt of the earth is.

**AM** – Professor, the Paulo Emilio I know is by reading his books. From his library...

**AC**– Yes, but he gave away practically all his books. He was extremely generous. Paulo Emilio gave a big friend of ours, Edgard Carone, a lot of books, real gems. Paulo was like that: if he heard you were interested in something he'd gather all his books on the theme together and give them to you. Real generous. So, in the end only a small portion of his books were left.

One of Paulo Emilio's big passions, as well as that of his friends, was Eça de Queiroz. When he was younger, he had a collection of busts of Eça de Queiroz. Fifteen or twenty of them. One day, I asked him about it and he told me he had sold them all. He always did things differently. When he was in hiding, he had to change his hideout and remembered this real rich friend he had, who lived in a big mansion on Alameda Barão de Limeira. He went over and told the maid: "tell Renato that Mr. João da Ega

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"I am an old member of this 'new generation'", perhaps a bit too old to be included in the midst of these young men who have come here to present their political ideas and programs.

Twenty years ago the young men from the Modernism movement said practically everything that came into their heads: 'I'll get any woman I want...' - as stated by one pillar of society; literally it is true, they lived in Dreamland. Many young men today are unable to say what they want with the clarity they would like. In certain cases, to say something without consequence, but still, something they feel the need to say, they are forced to beat around the bush and even go as far as saying, without any sincerity at all, something completely different. This is not good. Their message is left half unsaid leading to that they are not understood, or, even worse, they are misunderstood. And when you can't say what you want to, you are left with the consolation of not saying what you don't want to. This in itself demands a bit of heroism, once we are dealing with people the profession of which consists in precisely saying things; something completely dissatisfactory, because in the middle of all this hubbub today, nobody is listening to the silence. As to the rest, young men are natural gossipers.

Unable to break down the jailhouse or joyfully choke their guard, they fight with their cellmates about nothing or paint marine seascapes on the walls with fluffy clouds and stars while lovely naked women float about." (p.72)

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Souza, José Inácio Melo. *Paulo Emilio no Paraíso*. Rio de Janeiro: Record, 2002.

has to talk to him, right now". He liked to use the names of the characters in Eça's books. The maid, who already knew who he was, went to her employer and said: "Senhor Renato, senhor Paulo Emilio is at the door saying he's some guy called João da Égua [sic] and wants to talk to you." [laughter, "égua" translates to "mare"] He held up in the house for a while until one day somebody rang the doorbell and he thought it was the police. He rushed outside and hid in the dog's house. The dog, not understanding what was going on, started barking out loud while Paulo Emilio, inside his house tried to calm him down.

**AM** – In what is left of his library there are innumerable authors, some of which don't seem to be a reference for your generation, like Paul Valéry, who Paulo Emilio read a lot of.

**AC** – We all read a lot of Valéry. Paulo Emilio liked French culture. Our generation was all French. We all spoke French. I learned French as a boy in France. In high school you took four years of French. And if you took any admittance courses you had French again. But the guys weren't good at learning it. The girls who went to nun's schools spoke perfect French. I had a couple girl cousins who lived in Minas Gerais who went to nun schools. One of them told me she was very shy, but that her sister, Beatriz, was completely uninhibited, really outspoken. She'd say to the nuns, without beating around the bush: "Ma mère, mon vestidô est rasgüê. J'ai besoin d'une aiguille et d'une ligne pour coser mon vestidô." Or maybe: "Mon sapatô est molhê parce que j'ai tombé dans la chuva." So, Paulo Emilio, during his stay there in 1937-1939, delved into the French culture. Read a lot of Valéry, a lot of Proust.

**AM**– Do you think these books influenced Paulo Emilio's work?

**AC** – I don't know. Most of what Paulo Emilio read was political. For me, personally, Paulo Emilio was like some guardian angel. Because in the 30s, when I grew up, graduated, it was the first decade in which Brazilian intellectuals had to take a political stance. In general terms, the intellectuals were all on chummy terms with the regime. The emperor would hand out scholarships for studying in Europe... But then, after the Russian revolution, fascism and the crisis in 1929, everybody got more political. Nobody could be neutral anymore. You had to pick, either you were on the right or

the left. And in the middle, you had the liberals, looked upon as if they were wishy-washy. We all became very political. Me, for example, I never had a head for politics, I'm totally out of politics, although I was active in different parties my entire life. I don't have a political perception of things. I've always sympathized with the left. I'd read *The History of Socialism*, by Max Beer, *Anti-Düring*, by Engels. Summaries of *Das Kapital*. But all platonically, for myself. Paulo was tuned in; he wasn't actually part of the Communist Youth Party but knew all about their projects. And so, when he went to France, he was implicitly a Stalinist, the big thing at the time was Stalinist communism. And then you had the renegades as well, who were the Trotskyists. Calling somebody a Trotskyist was the worst thing you could call them. The simpler people, factory workers, party members, didn't know anything about Trotsky. They thought it was just a synonym for crook, pimp, incestuous fiend, assassin. They'd say: "that guy's a Trotskyist!", as if saying "the guy's a chicken thief!". The worst thing you could call someone. When Paulo Emilio went to Europe in 1937, he had two fundamental experiences there. The first was meeting the Spanish republican refugees, that told him how the communist party shot down left-wingers with different ideas. And then meeting the guys from POUM – the Worker's Party of Marxist Unification. A dissident leftwing party, not Stalinist. He became friends with Victor Serge, someone who had been in Moscow on the day they took over Saint Petersburg, a guy who had been through the revolution. And most of all, he learned about the Moscow Trials. He bought the records of the Moscow Trials, which I read. Records you can probably find in Carone's Library.<sup>16</sup> Paulo realized that Stalinism was a monstrosity. Something nobody realized at the time. Every left-wing sympathizer praised Stalin. Nobody knew anything. When Paulo Emilio came back in 1939, he showed us how Stalinism was really the degeneration of the Revolution. And how Trotsky was a much more righteous person, but this thing with Trotskyism and Stalinism is for the Russians. It doesn't have anything to do with Brazil.

**OF**– Was Paulo Emilio ever a Trotskyist?

**AC** – No! He was never a Trotskyist. They called us Trotskyists, detractors who wanted to disqualify us. We read the things Trotsky wrote. For me, the important

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<sup>16</sup> Edgard Carone's library is kept at the Republican Museum in Itu, SP.

thing that Paulo did was to keep me from being a Stalinist, or a Trotskyist. And to show me that the most important thing was to think about, based on Marxism, the kind of socialism best suited for Brazil's needs.

**AM**– What authors supported this socialism adjusted to Brazil's reality??

**AC** – It was a major personal effort of our own. And it was pathetic. We didn't have anything. We had to think of everything ourselves. I remember once I came across, in an American sociological anthology, edited by a left-winger, some guy called Caverlton, in which there were a lot of articles, one by Max Nomad, which I believe was a pseudonym, in which he annihilated Stalinism. There was Makhnovism, a type of anti-Stalinist anarchy movement. We'd gather together all these bits and pieces to construct something. Without any kind of base at all. We just thought it all up. It was Paulo who got me into politics. I would never be a politician, because I don't like politics. But he convinced me that each generation had a mission, a job to do, and ours was political. And talking about it so much I got into politics. I got into it and he left for Europe.

**AM**– He went back to Paris and wrote the book on Jean Vigo. And what about Brazilian politics?

**AC** – And there's the big paradox. He lost interest. Began concentrating on cinema. He never let off being a leftist, never stopped having political attitudes, but more on an individual basis. Very courageous of him. But he never again joined any kind of political group. Paulo would never have joined the Workers' Party (PT). Never! But I still keep what he instilled in me until today. This inversion of his was very strange. I got into politics and he got into cinema. He still had his political perception, continued being a leftist, kept the same attitudes, very bravely. I'll give you an example. In 1945, with democratization, when the dictatorship fell, not this last time, the time before. Fascists, Integralists, they all tried to rearticulate. They created an entity that began with a U, something like Union of Democratic Progressists. Got a general to join, a couple college professors and then held a big rally, at the Municipal Theater. The place was filled with Integralists. And Paulo Emilio went to put an end to it all. It was him, Edgard Carone, one of his constant buddies, and Renato Sampaio

Coelho. At the Municipal Theater, Paulo Emilio asks for the floor. The Integralists refuse vehemently. So, Paulo stands and says out loud: “Senhor President, Senhor General, you both are victims of a major farce. This here has nothing to do with any kind of Democratic Union. This here is an attempt to reinstate the Brazilian Fascist Party. And what you see all around you are the Integralists”.<sup>17</sup> Just to give you an idea of what Paulo was like.

**AM**– And did he get away unscathed?

**AC** – He got up and left soon after. The Fascists all wanted to grab hold and lynch him. But inept Integralist, Lima Neto, a poet, a very bad poet, poor guy, ran up and shouted: “Let him be!” Thus, allowing Paulo to leave. All this to show you how he continued with his political attitudes, with his political acts, but he no longer wanted anything to do with any kind of formal organization.

**AM**– You say that Paulo Emilio had an influence on you when you were younger, evident in your political ideas. But it seems that at a certain point the tables are turned and your thoughts as a critic begin to have an influence of Paulo Emilio’s work. I am thinking mainly about the book *Humberto Mauro, Cataguases, Cinearte* (1974).

**AC** – I’m not sure... To tell this story from the beginning you have to know how I decided to make cinematography a college course. I went to speak to the dean, Prof. Mario Ferri, to ask him for funds to invite Paulo Emilio for a series of lectures. That was in 1963. A great success. So, I decided to see if I couldn’t get Paulo Emilio to give courses. And at that time, an Argentine filmmaker, Fernando Birri, was visiting Brazil. I met him and he told me how he gave classes at the film school of an Argentine university. I asked him for his help and we went to dean Mario Ferri, and Birri, in the council room at the university, explained what a film school was all about, something that didn’t exist in Brazil. And this is how Paulo Emilio was hired to give a cinematography course. To tie in the film department, at a time when post-graduate

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<sup>17</sup> After the war Integralism was reestablished in Brazil’s political milieu and organized innumerable meetings similar to this one mentioned by Antonio Candido, later becoming the PRP (Party of Popular Representation) which initially denied their connection with Plinio Salgado’s movement. Cf. Christofolletti, Rodrigo. *A Enciclopédia do Integralismo: lugar de memória e apropriação do passado (1957-1961)*. Doctor’s Thesis. Rio de Janeiro: UFGV, 2010.

courses were beginning, I decided to create a specialization in literary theory and comparative literature. The first year, students have to take three subjects. Literary Theory I: obligatory. Theory and history of cinema: obligatory. And then they could choose their third subject from Aesthetics, Literature Sociology or the History of Art. And that was when Paulo became institutionalized. I then began thinking of putting together a Theory of Art and Literature course. So I went to talk to the dean at the time, who was the terrible military dictatorship dean, Gama e Silva. He was good enough to see me but rejected the project because they were already thinking to build the Communications and Arts School. But Paulo continued working with me. I wanted to get Decio involved as well, but he started working as a professor for dramatic Brazilian Literature with Aderaldo Castello. And Paulo continued with me, in Literary Theory and Comparative Literature. And that was how I was able to create a cinema course in the university. Not without resistance though. I heard about how startled a human geography teacher was when, in a general assembly, the dean announced his proposal of introducing a cinema course. In indignant displeasure the teacher said: “cinema?! At the university?! I can’t believe it! Pretty soon they’re going to want to have an academic department for sewing...” There were a few differences of opinion, but the college took it rather well. It was then that I urged him to write a doctoral thesis, for him to ratify his career. So he wrote the book on Humberto Mauro. And told me he had only written the book because of me. And how’d he do it? We had a pretty powerful group. As he already had a bachelor’s degree in philosophy, my wife, who was a professor of aesthetics in the philosophy department, agreed to be his mentor. But only theoretically, as he did all the work. And he got his degree the old way in which you didn’t have to take courses. All you did was present your thesis, period.

**AM** – It seems to me that the book on Humberto Mauro dialogues directly with *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* (1959).

**AC** – He in reality was rather impressed with *Formação da Literatura Brasileira*. But we disagreed a lot. You probably know that at a certain time he was possessed of a kind of furious nationalism. He used to say: “it’s foolish to read Proust, Valéry, these kind of things...” As anyone with a rigorously European education, super French like



him, who lived there for ten or twelve years, his patriotic reaction was pretty strange. I didn't agree and he'd tell me: "you were saved because you wrote *Formação da Literatura Brasileira* for twelve years. So you escaped from that French placenta and was able to be Brazilian. What saved you was *Formação da Literatura Brasileira*." He really liked *Formação*. He read and then commented on it with me. He was one of the rare friends of mine who read the book. He found various parallels between the history of cinematography and literature. I was scandalized by the fact that he'd go see these low-quality slapstick movies and think they were great. I'd tell him: "Paulo, you gotta be kidding!" But, can you believe it, today I love slapstick movies?! I even have this platonic passion for that slapstick star, Eliana [Macedo].

**AM**– Excuse me for insisting on this issue, but when he studied Humberto Mauro, it wasn't because he was a great filmmaker but because Humberto Mauro was inserted into a cultural system of sorts, right?

**AC**– That could be. I always have the tendency to think that it is I who owe others and not the contrary. So, it's kind of hard for me to understand this. I consider myself as being one of Paulo's disciples. He was my political guru. And, incidentally, my political ideas, which are today a bit heterodoxic, I developed based on a phrase by Paulo Emilio. In 1943, Paulo Emilio brought together the first political group to which I belonged. There were six of us, who would get together on Sunday mornings at the house of one of my uncles, to discuss Marxism, socialism, opposing the dictatorship. We'd distribute fliers, and one of our friends was arrested. I was already dating my wife-to-be and she'd help my type things up. And then there was [Hermínio] Sachetta, who was a Trotskyist and worked at the *Folha da Manhã* newspaper, where I was a critic, and he'd say: "listen, when you use the typewriter use gloves, to not leave any fingerprints behind". [laughter] So my wife and I would put on gloves, type it all out and distribute the fliers. Paulo Emilio decided to give our group a name: Popular Radical Action Group - GRAP. Just for the fun of it. But it got around. The other day I read a citation supposedly coming from GRAP in a book. Any unwary reader would think it was some kind of dangerous group, but it was just the six of us. One day we decided to increase activities and we joined the guys from Law School. With the help of that great student leader, Germinal Feijó – who was

always getting arrested – we formed a group with liberals and socialists. A large group we called the Resistance Front. We did a lot of things, including preventing the university from giving Getulio Vargas an *Honoris Causa* doctorate.<sup>18</sup> We fought for Brazil's entrance into the war effort. And things got heavy. There was a shootout, one young man was killed, a lot of people were arrested. That was in 1944. In early 1945, after José Américo de Almeida's interview with Carlos Lacerda, the press opened up. The dictatorship continued, but now with clipped nails. And they founded the UDN – National Democratic Union, which was created to be a major unified moderate-left front. Paulo Emilio went to the meetings but soon realized that this was not the case. And our Resistance Front broke up. The liberal ones went to UDN and Paulo founded the UDS – Democratic Socialism Union. Once again just another half dozen diehards, but a very interesting group. Paulo's efforts were decisive. The group lasted for around four or five months, six at the most. We'd get together at his house, and it all started growing bigger. There were ex-Stalinists, ex-Trotskyists, ex-members of the Socialist Party from 1933, militants with the black movements, factory workers, metal workers, including one black guy called Antonio Candido de Melo, with the same last name as me, and who came from hometown as well. One day we went to a political rally in the Pacaembu Stadium carrying a banner reading: "Union Freedom and the Right to Strike". Holding one side was Antonio Candido de Melo, black, on the other, Antonio Candido, white.<sup>19</sup> Paulo wrote a great manifesto. He had already written a manifesto for the Resistance Front. And thanks to him a lot of liberals went with us to UDS. And Paulo wrote the manifesto. But there was a lot of internal quarreling in the UDS, a couple overzealous revolutionary girls, who wanted to bomb Sé Square. And then when the Democratic Left in Rio was founded, we joined them. But me, I was very radical at the time, like all young people, and thought that the Democratic Left was too sugary, too white and blue. So I pulled away from them and

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<sup>18</sup> A collection of official correspondence, made available online by CPDOC-FGV, confirms the student demonstrations while mentioning the key role played by Germinal Feijó. With the intervention of the Minister of Education himself, Gustavo Capanema, the situation is resolved after Getulio Vargas cancelled his trip to São Paulo. Cf. <https://www.docvirt.com/docreader.net/DocReader.aspx?bib=CorrespGV2&PagFis=13372>

<sup>19</sup> A political rally held on June 16, 1945, in benefit of the National Democratic Union and the candidacy of Brigadier Eduardo Gomes, in which the Social Democratic Union disagreed with UDN's ideology. Cf. Benevides, Maria Victoria de Mesquita. *A UDN e o Udenismo: ambiguidades do liberalismo brasileiro (1945-1965)*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra, 1981.

then later, from Paulo. Soon after I joined a group of our old buddies from GRAP and a very radical Austrian lithographer who later founded the POLOP, Eric Czaczkes. They used to call him Eric Sachs, but his last name was Czaczkes. In POLOP he used Henrique Martins. This group, prior to POLOP, created a Working-Class Political Committee. We used to do our agitation work at the Printers' Union. But Paulo Emilio didn't have anything to do with that. We had a couple professors and the rest were all from the working class. I worked with them for around six months. But the UDS manifesto, over the years, got to me. And it was this phrase that helped me create my political attitude in that related to Brazil: "Throughout the long history of Brazil's pseudo-democracy, the large land owners, industry owners, store owners, they've all had a lot to say, the middle-class and factory workers have already said a few things as well. But the voices of those tilling the land have been silenced throughout Brazilian history."<sup>20</sup> For years that phrase has been bouncing around in my head. In 1955, one of our colleagues from the Socialist Party, called Francisco Julião, founded the Peasant Leagues. And then later died without a penny to his name in exile in Mexico. After a long time, I came to the following conclusion: Brazil's problem wasn't so much its class struggle. Class struggles are an inevitable historical prerequisite, they always exist. More importantly is the problem of the incorporation of the different layers. Hear the echo of Paulo's phrase here. What was Brazil's first task? To create the elites! During the early years of the monarchy, they needed to take a conservative step back because they had to create the elites, people who knew how to read and write. So the empire educated lawyers, doctors, engineers, teachers, etc. The monarchy was able to maintain Brazil by creating an elite. Back to the phrase: "Throughout the long years of Brazil's pseudo-democracy, the industry owners, large land owners, bankers, they've all had a lot to say", include here all the organic intellectuals, and you've got the formation of a Brazilian elite. Along with the abolition of slavery comes the Republic, so, it was time for immigration. Modern Brazil is made up of immigrants. The Italians, the Spaniards, Syrians, Japanese, etc.

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<sup>20</sup> The Democratic Socialist Union manifesto is included in Calil, Carlos Augusto, Machado, Maria Teresa (orgs.). *Paulo Emilio: um intelectual na linha de frente*. Op. Cit.p.96-99. The exact phrase that made such an impression on Antonio Candido is: "Throughout the long history of Brazil's pseudo-democracy, the large land owners, industry owners, store owners, they've all had a lot to say, the middle-class and factory workers have already said a few things as well. But the voices of those tilling the land have been silenced throughout Brazilian history." (p.99).

These immigrants had no spokesperson in Republican Brazil, even if there were uprisings, the Eighteen from the Fort in 1924, the Prestes Column. Meanwhile, the archaic oligarchy keeps giving the orders in this new Brazil. Up until 1929 that is, when Minas and São Paulo get on a collision course. So Minas went looking for a politician in one of the neighboring states, which practically didn't have any say in Brazil's affairs. The Revolution of 1930. I can imagine what Getulio must have thought to himself: "I don't stand a chance between Minas and São Paulo. Their oligarchies are too powerful. I'm new in the area. A Spaniard from down South, Tchê! I don't fit in with these people. Who can I get support from? The working class, immigrants, industry owners?" So, he put together the Labor Laws, gave money to the tycoons and, finally, reconfigured a New Brazil. The presence of the urban work force and middle class was guaranteed by the dictatorship. Now, all that was lacking was the third part. When Paulo speaks about a silent voice, he is saying that speaking-up means having a social conscious and political say in things. So Brazil's history is one of incorporation. We are now incorporating the poor and country folk. That is why Celso Furtado, rightly, said that the MST is the most important political movement in the XX century in Brazil. With all the errors they might commit, the MST is this third phase mentioned by Paulo Emilio. A phase that Lula put together, something that was not foreseen in Paulo's scheme. In Brazil we have something that other countries don't have: the utterly impoverished. Like what a friend of mine from Milan who called me up recently said: "In Italia c'è la povertà ma no c'è la miseria. In Brasile c'è la povertà e c'è la miseria." This is something terrible. A country making great progress but filled with destitute people. Something insane! And this began to be addressed by Lula. Lula incorporated somewhere around thirty to forty million people into the economy. So we can think that things are beginning to happen. And that is why I think that the XX century is going to be the century that will confirm Paulo Emilio: all we need now is to add the destitute to that large voiceless mass of the tillers of the land. Joking aside, this phrase by Paulo was my political north. And that is why I can honestly say that he was my guru. He had a head for politics, something I don't have. And this can give you an idea of just how profound my connection with him was.

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